

AS FOR MYSELF

Ann Arbor, Buffalo, New York City, New Jersey.



The Buffalo (N. Y.) Liths at the International Institute party. Most of the above people are refugees. I'm shown with the kids on the floor. Mrs. Zakarevicius is the young D. P. lady who sang astoundingly beautifully several Lithuanian folk songs (second from left), next to her is Mrs. John Aperonis, the moving spirit in the small Lithuanian colony of Buffalo. Behind Mrs. Aperonis is an old Lith resident of Buffalo (I forgot his name) who heads the Buffalo branch of the Lithuanian National Society, SLA. Next to him (looking left) is Mr. Aperonis. (Photo by Arthur Schrader).

On February 3rd I landed in Ann Arbor, Mich., at the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Amneus. That evening a very nice group of enthusiastic folk dancers attended the session, among them my old, old friends Mrs. Dean Saxton from Plymouth and the former Marjorie Fox from Detroit. After the session a few of us — John, Carolyn and Pat Amneus, Mary Lou Cline and Don Foxworth — a former Denver U folk dancer, and myself — landed at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Jay Bolt, spending the evening in discussion to the accompaniment of refreshments. At 2:30 A. M. I caught the train for Buffalo.

In Buffalo I was met by my buddy, Miss Katherine Haviland of the International Institute. Frank and Jane Giori joined us for lunch and we rushed for the first session with the "Work shop" group.

The evening class was attended by a large group. It was also the gathering of the VILTIS clan-Fritton, Johnson, Suedemeyers, Fuchs, Kaufmann, Francisco, Poeltl, etc. Several cars came in from Rochester, N. Y., and among them a former star pupil of our group, Lew Mahoney. I sure was happy to see him.

I was guest at the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Aperonis. Mrs. Aperonis is active in the small Lithuanian colony of Buffalo and her home is the gathering place of all recent refugees (me too). I was pleasantly surprised to note in her flower garden, protruding from amid the snow, Lithuania's national flower, the Ruta (rue), still verdant in spite of winter.

Sunday morning we went to Niagara Falls to hear Mass in the Lithuanian Church of St. George and back to the Aperonis home for a Lithuanian repast. Another session that afternoon and once more for a Lith dinner at the Aperonis home in the company of Miss Haviland and a family of D. P.'s

That Sunday evening Miss Haviland and Mrs. Aperonis "cooked up" a Lithuanian gathering at the Institute. Several Lithuanian families as well as some of

the International Institute folk dancers. We opened the evening doing simple Lithuanian singing games (Našlys, Jaunimelis, Noriu Miego) and finally graduated into the Women's Mikita, Koja koja and Suktinis. An impromptu program followed. Mrs. Klemensas Zakarevicius, a D. P., sang several folk songs; her clear and beautiful voice surprised and thrilled everyone. Mrs. Aperonis, who was also her accompanist, joined Mrs. Zakarevicius in a duet and then all of the Liths present sang a folk song. For the D. P.'s it was the first gathering and party in this country. A simple and as small as it was, they were thrilled by it, and happiness shone in their faces. The Institute dancers presented an International program. The north Lithuanian (Žemaitis) square dance, Jonkelis, was performed with such smoothness and perfection that any Lith group could be envious of their accomplishment. The Italian Tarantella, a Kolo and the Jarabe Tapatio were other numbers on the program. More dancing and refreshments followed and a most pleasant evening, thanks to Miss Haviland and the Institute, ended.

The following day I was on my way to New York City. The N.Y. Central, being late as usual, brought me to my destination in the nick of time (with plenty of rushing and hurrying) for my scheduled class with four Polish couples — Mr. Eugene Jablonski and friends — who desired a Polish Mazur routine. Again refreshments and another day ended.

The rush began. How one could be everywhere the same time, became an acute problem. I dashed over to the Lithuanian American Information Center for a brief visit with Miss Mary Kizys and Mr. Constance Jurgėla, two tireless workers for the Lithuanian cause who expend years of toil, sweat and devotion. I dashed over to the Kamin's (in the opposite direction of the city) whose book store on the dance is most interesting and most complete. I had lunch with them and then dashed over to Newark, New Jersey for visit with Frank Kaltman and supper at the home of Jack Stukas and then dashed back to 93rd St. of New York in time for a session with Eugene Tso and his group.

Eugene Tso named that evening "The Beliajus Night", an honor I appreciate. Many VILTIES were there too. I was surprised to find Vince Samaška, an Ateitis dancer who flew in that day, from Chicago for two days at Tso's Miriam Marcus and Edith Hirsh, two of my pals and Chicago students and Eddy Nadel, dance leader from Boston, were there too, as was Olga Kubitsky whom I met in Stockton, Cal. The Tso's are a very interesting, friendly and most unassuming couple, Eugene being Chinese and Mrs. Tso's a most beautiful girl, of Scandinavian extraction. Together with Vince I went on a sightseeing tour the following morning getting lost and managing to wind up somewhere. We somehow landed at St. Patrick's cathedral where we were going in the exact opposite direction. Saw Radio City, visited a Settlement House in the Bowery saw our Ukrainian friend, Slavka Gloria Surmach, had dinner at 11 Comte, an Italian fancy joint, and then we were on our way to Newark and for supper with the Kaltmans.

That night I had a session in Paterson, N. J. with Rod LaFarge's group. The place was small and the crowd was big, exuberant and enthusiastic, and we managed to cover quite a bit of ground. Rod and Helen are a "swell" couple. At that place I had the pleasure of meeting the Galinskis and, at long last, Helen Kulber with whom I've corresponded for some 17 years. She came in from Brooklyn and I put her to work — how mean of me. But she is a grand person. Helen is also a cousin of Helen

Hermans have been extremely hospitable to me and I appreciate their wonderful reception. From there, Frank Kaltman moved me over to Newark.

The following morning (Saturday) we left again for New York to attend Kaltman's special class for Square Dance leader, and after the class some 20 or us went to a Chop Suey for some "dine and talk", and then I was on my run again trying to see at least a few more people.

I went to see the wife of my cousin and her daughter. The mother arrived recently from an Italian DP camp where she lived since she fled Lithuania from the German and Russian occupations. She was separated from her daughter, who is now only 22 years, for the past 8-9 years and both have suffered untold hardships. The father lost his life in the Dachau ovens while the surviving members of the family are rotting away in Siberian slave labor camps with no hope of ever seeing them. Their tale is grim, one that has been experienced by millions of Balts.

After a hurried repast wonderfully prepared by Helen Kaltman, I rushed out to Linden, N. J. where the Lithuanian DP's presented their first program of songs, a playet and dances. The playet dealt with nostalgic longings for the land they had to flee. The dances they presented were Sustas, Lenciugėlis (very cleverly performed) and Kubilas. Dancing followed. The DP's seem to be very fond of doing a Germanic type of a ballroom dance called "Zvinka", an equivalent of our rag time. Naturally, they are all youths who spent their last 7-9 years in Germany, having left Lithuania either in their early teens or younger, and as a result, the polkas are strange to them while the Zvinka is what they know.

The recording took place on Sunday and it lasted from 11:00 A. M. to 7:45 P. M. I caught the train by the "skin of my teeth" at 8:15. My entire New York stay seemed to have been made up of keeping appointments and catching trains.

I was back in Chicago and got the coldest shoulder ever. The worst storm in 15 years was there to extend its cold and nasty reception. Fooey!

My impressions of New York are mixed. It is, no doubt, the American metropolis, the home of the theatre, nightlife (didn't visit any), Radio City and many "seven wonders". There is much to see, much to do, and many places to go. In comparison with Chicago it is a cleaner city and the transportation unbelievably reasonable. The people you know seem to be grand, wonderful and most friendly. The people you don't know are rude and selfish. Everyone rushes and everyone tries to cut everybody else's throat. No one will give someone else a chance and the same attitude is reflected even among the taxi drivers. The numeral system is so antiquated and confusing that even the police were at a loss to know where in the dickens certain addresses can be located. On one occasion they went into an huddle with private citizens spending 15 minutes in deliberation to an inquired direction, and after all that trouble we landed at the wrong destination. A ticket seller on the sub, not desiring to be bothered, sent me on a wild goose chase and I landed in Flatbush, with time short and precious to me. Their speech (on a whole) is loud. They seem to add a "u" before consonants, rolling full their mouths; Broo'dway, Too'alk. Certain "r's" are replaced with an "oi" sound. It is a city of brick and pavement. Empty lots are the playgrounds for the city's children. Tho the churches (Catholic) for the most part are squeezed in and often hidden, they seem to be visited constantly by worshipers who find time to recite a prayer and make the Stations



Miss Alicia Monico, an El Salvadorian who recently came from Mexico City, and Vytis Beliajus doing the Jarabé Tapatio at an impromptu program for the Liths of Buffalo. Both met for the first time and without rehearsing clicked excellently in the execution of the dance. (Photo by Arthur Schrader)

Kramer in Toronto, another grand buddy of the Ateitis gang and VILTIS. I went back to New York that night.

The following day Edith Hirsch and Miriam Marcus took me out for luncheon at the Russian Tea House next to the Carnegie Hall and from there we went to visit the most interesting (to me) museum, the Jewish Museum. I've learned a great deal regarding ritualistic and traditional matters. I marveled the Jewish resourcefulness and wished the Lithuanians could be in a position to own an institution on that order. The building is the former Warburg mansion on Fifth Avenue.

That night (Thursday, Feb. 9) I had my session at Hunter College, where Miss Olga Kubitsky does Phys. Ed. teaching. Tho I met her only during the past summer in the Stockton (Cal.) camp, we act like "ancient" timers. She is a "swell" gal. The session was successful and we all had a good time. Present were some of my old friends — Bill Tait, who until last year was in charge of the Denver U. square dance group; Vera Thalrose, a former member of Chicago's Dance Council, Miriam Marcus and Edith Hirsh; and the Michael Hermans. After the session, Olga, Seymour Church, Michael and Mary Ann Herman and I went to Nautlius, a very nice Greek eatery, to dine and talk. We did plenty of both.

The following A. M. I again did "dashing". Dashed down to see once again Miss Mary Kizis, from there to upper New York to meet Katya Delakova and Fred Burke, noted Jewish dancers. We spent a pleasant hour together.

Since I teach once a week at a Jewish College, naturally, my interest is in that phase too. The next two hours I spent at the Jewish Education Bureau with Mrs. Dvorah Lapson, who is in charge of the dance phase of the work and acts as the "clearing house" for this activity in the United States. Mrs. Lapson returned recently from a summer visit in Israel and is, herself, a pioneer in the Jewish dance field in the U. S. Mrs. Lapson was most generous with her time devoted to me. She generously supplied me with new Israeli material. From there I dashed out to Flushing to visit the Michael Hermans. Once again they took me out to the fancy eatery, Nautlius, and from there we went to attend their class. The